

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 8, 9, and 14 are currently pending. Claims 1, 3-7, 10-13, and 15-18 have been canceled without prejudice by the present amendment. The changes to the claims are supported by the originally filed specification and do not add new matter.

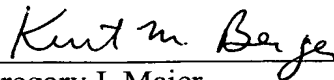
In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 3-7, 10-13, and 15-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,899,614 to Maeda et al. (hereinafter "the '614 patent") in view of European Patent Application No. EP 0945780 to Ando et al. (hereinafter "the '780 application"); and Claims 8, 9, and 14 were allowed.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claims 1, 3-7, 10-13, and 15-18 are rendered moot by the present cancellation of those claims.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The application as submitted herewith is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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